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EUR/EE/Balkans

Serbian Oil Supplies: Sources and Supplies

The JNA has not restricted military operations in a way which would suggest it has immediate worries about the exhaustion of its fuel supplies. Serbia's normal supplies of oil have been disrupted through the cut-off of the Adria pipeline, and loss of access to the ports of Split and Rijeka. Serbia may be able to procure oil from a variety of sources. The federal government has access to small domestic supplies from Vojvodina and has recently obtained 1.09 million tonnes (approx. 8 million barrels) from this source. Lack of sizable domestic reserves, however, has forced Belgrade to look to foreign suppliers, such as the Soviet Union, Libya, Angola, the PRC, and Iran, to meet its needs. We estimate that Serbia is meeting one-fourth of its oil needs from combined domestic and foreign sources.

Even though sources do exist, transporting oil to Serbia poses serious difficulties. The three possible routes are:

- up the Danube through Romania by barge
- by rail from Greece through Macedonia
- by tanker to the Montenegrin port of Bar from where it is transported by land to Serbia

Few of these alternatives are very viable. A shortage of oil barges and frequent disruptions in Danube river traffic as a result of fighting, limits to 90,000 tonnes per month (657,000 barrels) the amount of oil which can be brought by river. The utility of the port of Bar is limited by a shortage of tanker trucks, the existence of only one rail line, and inadequate roads linking Bar with Serbia. Optimistically the railway might be able to carry 900 tonnes daily (6570 barrels). Macedonia has, therefore, become a primary conduit for oil supplies; its refinery in Skopje is providing small supplies to both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. It recently received 120,000 tonnes (876,000 barrels) of oil probably from Thessaloniki.

No estimate of the current fuel reserves of the Yugoslavian military are available. Before the conflict, full capacity included ten million barrels of storage for normal military use and an additional war reserve capacity of eight million barrels. military fuel reserves were kept 75 to 80 percent filled. The JNA, however, has lost an unknown but probably large share of its reserves previously kept in Croatia and almost certainly has had to draw on

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other reserves to support ongoing operations. Total capacity of non-military reserves throughout Yugoslavia included 24 million barrels of crude oil and 40.5 million barrels of refined petroleum products. Normal fuel consumption in Yugoslavia was 300,000 barrels per day. [REDACTED]

There is strong indication that an oil shortage does exist within Serbia, if not yet within the military. Serbian refineries at Novi Sad and Pancevo have been shut down due to lack of supplies. Civilian gas lines in Belgrade reportedly are six hours long -- despite reduced consumption as men deploy to the front. [REDACTED]

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